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Citizen Shevchenko stands firm

By Lucy Keyser
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Moments after taking the oath of American citizenship on Friday, Arkady Shevchenko — the highest ranking Soviet official to defect to the United States — urged his new compatriots to stand firm against those who harbor less than hard-line sentiment toward his former government.

"Even when I was a Soviet, I had the feeling I was born in the wrong country," said Mr. Shevchenko, a former personal adviser to Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko and later undersecretary general at the United Nations.

About 200 supporters greeted "Citizen Shevchenko" at a reception sponsored by the Jamestown Foundation, an organization that helps defectors adjust to their new lives and share knowledge.

"We're not very much welcome in some prestigious institutions in the United States... those studying the Soviet Union," Mr. Shevchenko said, explaining that he hears the argument that "defectors jeopardize their work with the Soviets."

He did not mention any specifics, saying he tries not to use labels such as liberal, conservative, Democrat or Republican.

"But many Americans don't know the necessity to fight against old enemies, foreign and domestic," Mr. Shevchenko said.

Leo Cherne, vice chairman of the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board, warned Mr. Shevchenko he would learn the United States is a "curious country."

"We have a misguided sense of what's appropriate... and an ambivalent attitude toward intelligence and secrecy," Mr. Cherne said. Mr. Cherne drew laughs when he hoped out loud that his comments were being transmitted to Vladimir Posner, the Radio Moscow commentator who rebutted President Reagan's defense speech last week.

"We have a very curious way of deciding which countries' freedoms matter... and which ones we can ignore," Mr. Cherne said. "But I have a simple view, and there's no more

reliable test of where freedom exists than to ask the simple question, 'Where do people flee from and where do they flee to?'"

Immediately after being sworn in by U.S. Circuit Judge Alex Kozinski, Mr. Shevchenko said: "I was more than glad to break with the Soviet regime, but not with the Soviet people."

Mr. Shevchenko was with the United Nations in 1978 passing Soviet secrets to U.S. agents when he broke with the Soviet government and renounced his membership in the Soviet Communist Party.

He expressed sadness in remembering his homeland where his two children live. After he refused to return to Moscow for consultations, his wife went home and committed suicide.

Mr. Shevchenko now lives in Washington with his American wife, Elaine Jackson. He is popular on the lecture circuit, and has written the best seller, "Breaking with Moscow."